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# President Obama Protects Untouched Marine Wilderness in Alaska

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Summary: President Obama is designating 9.8 million acres in the waters of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas off Alaska's coast as off-limits to consideration for oil and gas leasing.

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Today, [the President is taking another step](#) to protect our most valuable natural resources. Relying on an authority used by presidents of both parties since Eisenhower, President Obama is designating 9.8 million acres in the waters of the [Beaufort](#) and [Chukchi](#) Seas off Alaska's coast as off-limits to consideration for future oil and gas leasing. This action builds on recent steps by the President to protect [Bristol Bay](#) and the [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge](#).

Teeming with biological diversity, these areas in the Beaufort and Chukchi are part of one of the last great marine wildernesses left untouched by development. Endangered whales swim through the icy seas, walrus and bearded seals feed on the Hanna Shoal, and more than 40 species of fish like cod and herring grant fishermen their livelihoods. Each year, the bowhead whale hunt draws Native communities throughout northern Alaska, as essential for their sustenance as it is to their way of life and cultural history.

The President's action comes as the Department of the Interior releases its draft five-year program for offshore oil and gas leasing on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf, which proposes that nearly 80 percent of estimated undiscovered technically recoverable oil and gas resources on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf be made available for leasing, including three potential lease sales off the coast of Alaska. The areas designated as off-limits by the President include Alaskan coastal buffer and subsistence areas that have previously been excluded from leasing plans under both Democratic and Republican Administrations – as well as some critical additional areas like the biologically rich Hanna Shoal.

Today's actions reflect President Obama's balanced approach to offshore energy development. The President's all-of-the-above energy strategy has supported economic growth and helped in reducing our

dependence on foreign oil – and today, the U.S. is the world's leading producer of oil and natural gas. But even as we consider new places that may be appropriate to responsibly develop oil and gas, we can take meaningful steps to protect areas that matter most for our environment, our Native communities, and our cultural identity.

As the Administration proposes continued development of our offshore oil and gas resources, the President is committed to preserving our most treasured places for future generations. Today we have taken another step to deliver on that promise.



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